WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An information processing apparatus capable
of acquiring, from a peripheral device management
apparatus for managing information specific to a

5   peripheral device connected through a local area
network, information specific to said peripheral
device through an external network, and, from a
general-purpose computer management apparatus for
managing information specific to a general-purpose

10 computer connected through said local area network,
information specific to said general-purpose computer
through said external network, thereby executing
unified management on said peripheral device and on
said general-purpose computer, the information

15 processing apparatus comprising:

    discrimination means for discriminating whether
the information received through said external
network is specific to said peripheral device or is
relating to said general-purpose computer;

20   specifying means for specifying, in case said
discrimination means recognizes that the information
received through said external network is specific to
the peripheral device and indicates absence of
inventory, information for specifying an expendable

25 included in said information indicating the absence
of inventory and information for specifying a user
who is the owner of the expendable showing said

absence of inventory; and

display control means for causing a predetermined display unit to display information indicating the type of said expendable specified by
5   said specifying means and information for identifying said user.

2.   An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising instruction
10 means for instructing, to a distribution server communicable through an external network, delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means to a destination based on said user information.

15

3.   An information processing apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said user information includes an e-mail address of a communication address, and the apparatus further comprises confirmation mail
20 informing means for sending, to said e-mail address, a confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means and showing absence of inventory.

25   4.   An information processing apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising alarm means for informing an alarm to said distribution server or

to a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge

of distribution, in response, after the instruction

for delivery by said instruction means, to reception

of information indicating a decrease or absence of

5   the inventory of said expendable of the type

specified by said specifying means.

5.   An information processing apparatus

according to claim 1, wherein said inventory absence

10   information includes information indicating the

remaining number of inventory of said specified

expendable.

6.   An information processing apparatus

15   according to claim 1, wherein said acquisition means

includes first acquisition means for acquiring,

through said external network, information on a

general-purpose computer connected through said local

area network and second acquisition means for

20   acquiring, through said external network, information

specific to the peripheral device connected through

said local area network, wherein said first

acquisition means acquires information relating to

said general-purpose computer in a first format

25   specific to said general-purpose computer and said

second acquisition means acquires information

specific to said peripheral device in a second format

specific to said peripheral device.

7.   An information processing apparatus
according to claim 6, further comprising conversion
5   means for converting the information of said first
format relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition means into said
second format, wherein said predetermined display
unit is provided in an apparatus capable of
10   interpreting said second format and is capable of
display based on said second format.

8.   An information processing apparatus
according to claim 6, further comprising conversion
15   means for converting the information of said second
format relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said second acquisition means into said
first format, wherein said predetermined display unit
is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting
20   said first format and is capable of display based on
said first format.

9.   An information processing apparatus
according to claim 6, further comprising conversion
25   means for converting the information of said first
format relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition means and the

information of said second format relating to said
peripheral device and acquired by said second
acquisition means into a common third format, wherein
said predetermined display unit is capable of display
5 based on said third format.

        10. An information processing apparatus
comprising:
        reception means for receiving inventory absence
10 information indicating that the inventory number of
expendable of a predetermined type used in a
peripheral device is less than a predetermined number,
together with information for specifying the user;
and
15   informing means for informing an alarm to a
communication address assigned to a person in charge
of distribution, in response, after an instruction
for delivery according to the information on the
expendable of predetermined type included in the
20 inventory absence information received by said
reception means and said information for specifying
the user, to reception of information indicating a
decrease or absence of the inventory of said
expendable of said predetermined type by said
25 reception means.

        11. A management control method for an

information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information

5   specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network,

10   information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral device and on said general-purpose computer, the method comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether

15   the information received through said external network is specific to said peripheral device or is relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said discrimination step recognizes that the information

20   received through said external network is specific to the peripheral device and indicates absence of inventory, information for specifying an expendable included in said information indicating the absence of inventory and information for specifying a user

25   who is the owner of the expendable showing said absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a

predetermined display unit to display information
indicating the type of said expendable specified by
said specifying means and information for identifying
said user.

5

12. A management control method according to
claim 11, further comprising an instruction step of
instructing, to a distribution server communicable
through an external network, delivery of the
10 expendable of the type specified by said specifying
means to a destination based on said user information.

13. A management control method according to
claim 12, wherein said user information includes an
15 e-mail address of a communication address, and the
method further comprises a confirmation mail
informing step of sending, to said e-mail address, a
confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of the
expendable of the type specified by said specifying
20 step and showing absence of inventory.

14. A management control method according to
claim 12, further comprising an alarm step of
informing an alarm to said distribution server or to
25 a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge of
distribution, in response, after the instruction for
delivery by said instruction step, to reception of

information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of the type specified by said specifying step.

5   15. A management control method according to claim 11, wherein said inventory absence information includes information indicating the remaining number of inventory of said specified expendable.

10   16. A management control method according to claim 11, wherein said acquisition step includes a first acquisition means for acquiring, through said external network, information on a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network

15   and a second acquisition step of acquiring, through said external network, information specific to the peripheral device connected through said local area network, wherein said first acquisition step acquires information relating to said general-purpose computer

20   in a first format specific to said general-purpose computer and said second acquisition step acquires information specific to said peripheral device in a second format specific to said peripheral device.

25   17. A management control method according to claim 16, further comprising a conversion step for converting the information of said first format

relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition step into said
second format, wherein said predetermined display
unit is provided in an apparatus capable of

5   interpreting said second format and is capable of
display based on said second format.

18.   A management control method according to
claim 16, further comprising a conversion step of

10   converting the information of said second format
relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said second acquisition step into said
first format, wherein said predetermined display unit
is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting

15   said first format and is capable of display based on
said first format.

19.   A management control method according to
claim 16, further comprising a conversion step of

20   converting the information of said first format
relating to said general-purpose computer and
acquired by said first acquisition step and the
information of said second format relating to said
peripheral device and acquired by said second

25   acquisition step into a common third format, wherein
said predetermined display unit is capable of display
based on said third format.

20. A management control method comprising:

a reception step of receiving inventory absence information indicating that the inventory number of expendable of a predetermined type used in a

5   peripheral device is less than a predetermined number, together with information for specifying the user; and

an informing step of informing an alarm to a communication address assigned to a person in charge

10 of distribution, in response, after an instruction for delivery according to the information on the expendable of predetermined type included in the inventory absence information received by said reception step and said information for specifying

15 the user, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of said predetermined type by said reception step.

20   21. A computer program to be executed by an information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information

25 specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing

information specific to a general-purpose computer
connected through said local area network,
information specific to said general-purpose computer
through said external network, thereby executing

5   unified management on said peripheral device and on
said general-purpose computer, the program
comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether
the information received through said external

10   network is specific to said peripheral device or is
relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said
discrimination step recognizes that the information
received through said external network is specific to

15   the peripheral device and indicates absence of
inventory, information for specifying an expendable
included in said information indicating the absence
of inventory and information for specifying a user
who is the owner of the expendable showing said

20   absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a
predetermined display unit to display information
indicating the type of said expendable specified by
said specifying means and information for identifying

25   said user.

22.   A computer program according to claim 21,

further comprising an instruction step of instructing, to a distribution server communicable through an external network, delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying means to a

5   destination based on said user information.

23.   A computer program according to claim 22, wherein said user information includes an e-mail address of a communication address, and the method

10   further comprises a confirmation mail informing step of sending, to said e-mail address, a confirmation mail for instructing the delivery of the expendable of the type specified by said specifying step and showing absence of inventory.

15

24.   A computer program according to claim 22, further comprising an alarm step of informing an alarm to said distribution server or to a portable terminal assigned to a person in charge of

20   distribution, in response, after the instruction for delivery by said instruction step, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of the type specified by said specifying step.

25

25.   A computer program according to claim 21, wherein said inventory absence information includes

information indicating the remaining number of
inventory of said specified expendable.

26. A computer program according to claim 21,
5   wherein said acquisition step includes a first
acquisition means for acquiring, through said
external network, information on a general-purpose
computer connected through said local area network
and a second acquisition step of acquiring, through
10   said external network, information specific to the
peripheral device connected through said local area
network, wherein said first acquisition step acquires
information relating to said general-purpose computer
in a first format specific to said general-purpose
15   computer and said second acquisition step acquires
information specific to said peripheral device in a
second format specific to said peripheral device.

27. A computer program according to claim 26,
20   further comprising a conversion step for converting
the information of said first format relating to said
general-purpose computer and acquired by said first
acquisition step into said second format, wherein
said predetermined display unit is provided in an
25   apparatus capable of interpreting said second format
and is capable of display based on said second format.

28. A computer program according to claim 26, further comprising a conversion step of converting the information of said second format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said second acquisition step into said first format, wherein said predetermined display unit is provided in an apparatus capable of interpreting said first format and is capable of display based on said first format.

29. A computer program according to claim 26, further comprising a conversion step of converting the information of said first format relating to said general-purpose computer and acquired by said first acquisition step and the information of said second format relating to said peripheral device and acquired by said second acquisition step into a common third format, wherein said predetermined display unit is capable of display based on said third format.

30. A computer program to be executed by an information processing apparatus, comprising:

a reception step of receiving inventory absence information indicating that the inventory number of expendable of a predetermined type used in a peripheral device is less than a predetermined number,

together with information for specifying the user; and

an informing step of informing an alarm to a communication address assigned to a person in charge of distribution, in response, after an instruction for delivery according to the information on the expendable of predetermined type included in the inventory absence information received by said reception step and said information for specifying the user, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of said predetermined type by said reception step.

31.   A memory medium storing a computer readable program to be executed by an information processing apparatus capable of acquiring, from a peripheral device management apparatus for managing information specific to a peripheral device connected through a local area network, information specific to said peripheral device through an external network, and, from a general-purpose computer management apparatus for managing information specific to a general-purpose computer connected through said local area network, information specific to said general-purpose computer through said external network, thereby executing unified management on said peripheral

device and on said general-purpose computer, the

program comprising:

a discrimination step of discriminating whether

the information received through said external

5   network is specific to said peripheral device or is

relating to said general-purpose computer;

a specifying step for specifying, in case said

discrimination step recognizes that the information

received through said external network is specific to

10 the peripheral device and indicates absence of

inventory, information for specifying an expendable

included in said information indicating the absence

of inventory and information for specifying a user

who is the owner of the expendable showing said

15 absence of inventory; and

a display control step of causing a

predetermined display unit to display information

indicating the type of said expendable specified by

said specifying means and information for identifying

20 said user.

32. A memory medium storing computer readable

codes, the codes comprising:

a reception step of receiving inventory absence

25 information indicating that the inventory number of

expendable of a predetermined type used in a

peripheral device is less than a predetermined number,

together with information for specifying the user; and

an informing step of informing an alarm to a communication address assigned to a person in charge

5 of distribution, in response, after an instruction for delivery according to the information on the expendable of predetermined type included in the inventory absence information received by said reception step and said information for specifying

10 the user, to reception of information indicating a decrease or absence of the inventory of said expendable of said predetermined type by said reception step.